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Baker-Polito Administration Celebrates Benefits of 150 Miles of New Trails for Walking and Biking

Work on Cape Cod underscores importance of supporting local trail networks and connections to recreation, tourism and economic opportunity

DENNIS, MA – Continuing to prioritize a high level of access to the Commonwealth's natural resources, and recognizing the economic, recreational, environmental, transit and public health benefits of a state trail network, Governor Charlie Baker and Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito today announced additional funding commitments to further develop the Cape Cod Rail Trail (CCRT) and increase the budget of the Recreational Trails Program (RTP) by 60%, from \$1.1 million to \$1.8 million.

Since 2015, under the Baker-Polito Administration, approximately 150 miles of new trail have been designed, planned, funded, and/or completed with trail rehabilitation and repair also becoming a major priority.

"Trails like the Cape Cod Rail Trail provide countless benefits to those who use them and the communities that support them, whether it's access to open space and waterfronts, reduced congestion and carbon emissions, or opportunities to enjoy healthy, recreational activity," **said Governor Charlie Baker**. "We are committed to working with our municipal partners to make the investments that can maintain and expand these vibrant assets for generations to come across the Commonwealth."

To further statewide efforts, the administration has brought together a dedicated team across the multiple transportation and environmental agencies that oversee the design, construction, funding and maintenance of improved or paved multi-use trails to work closely with municipalities to connect gaps between trails and to expand trail networks, including safety and accessibility enhancements and maintenance. The development of a state Shared Use Path Design Guide and State Bicycle Plan is underway and will help to align the mutual strategic vision and goals of improving trail policy, planning and investment.

“From Cape Cod to North Adams, extensive trail systems intersect to provide families stronger communities in which to live, work and have fun,” **said Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito**. “As our administration has done across so many other parts of state government, we look forward to streamlining and expanding the resources available to the 351 cities and towns which want to enhance those opportunities throughout Massachusetts.”

Currently, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) is overseeing a Cape Cod Rail Trail extension project and today’s event showcased a bike and pedestrian bridge built over the roadway of Route 134 in Dennis. In addition to the pedestrian bridge, between now and the end of the fall MassDOT will complete a shared-use path from the trail terminus located on Route 134 in Dennis to Peter Homer Park located west of Station Avenue in Yarmouth. The next phase of the project will consist of the construction of a pedestrian bridge over the Bass River to provide a connection for the CCRT extension. Once complete, the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) will manage the new 3.7 mile section of the trail. Features of the project include:

- The paving of the multiuse extension;
- The installation of fencing, railings, granite mill posts, compass rose, signage, and boulders;
- The installation of Rapid Flashing Beacons at crossings;
- The painting of line striping; and,
- The placing of plants, grass seeds, and other landscaping components.

“Access to the natural world remains a high priority of the Baker-Polito Administration, whether that is through important projects like extending the CCRT, or through funding opportunities like the Recreational Trails Program Grants,” **said Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Matthew Beaton**. “By working closely with our federal and community partners, state government is able to ensure outdoor recreational opportunities are readily available for the public to utilize.”

“Governor Baker and Lt. Governor Polito have the vision to understand that by

investing in bike trails they are addressing critical gaps in local transportation networks,” **said Transportation Secretary and CEO Stephanie Pollack**. “Trails make meaningful connections for people to libraries, schools, stores, places of work, entertainment and community centers. MassDOT is pleased to be working with other state agencies to create networks of trails and fill gaps between trails because these pathways, if designed and built right, will encourage the public to travel on foot and on bike for many of the short trips people take every day.”

The Recreational Trails Program provides grants, which range from \$500 to \$100,000 depending on the scope of the project, that serve as an important funding source for municipalities and nonprofits seeking to improve all types of trails. The grants can be used to improve long-distance hiking trails, develop multi-use rail trails, and maintain ATV and snowmobile trails, as well as to create or maintain municipally owned trails. Additionally, each recipient matches their grant with a minimum twenty percent in funding or in-kind services.

“Trails serve an important component within the Massachusetts state parks system, often passing through fragile ecosystems, such as wetlands, forests, and waterways, providing the public with excellent opportunities to receive an up-close and personal view of a variety of species, and the protected land that they coexist and depend on,” **said DCR Commissioner Leo Roy**. “The Baker-Polito Administration remains committed to the promotion and protection of the Commonwealth’s natural, cultural, and historic resources for future generations.”

"The Cape Cod Rail Trail is a unique and spectacular feature of our peninsula. I am encouraged by our shared commitment to promote development of the Trail, including a funding increase to the Recreational Trails Program by 60%," **said State Senator Julian Cyr (D – Truro)**. "Not only will this ensure that the trail is safe and well maintained, but it will provide an economic boost to the region by encouraging more visitors to experience this beautiful corner of the Commonwealth by foot or by bike."

"The Cape Cod Rail Trail is not only a gorgeous thoroughfare for pedestrians, joggers, and bicyclists, but it has also been an economic driver for the Lower and Outer Cape for years," **said State Representative Timothy R. Whelan (R – Brewster)**. "We are looking forward to this extension reaching deeper into the Mid Cape area and we thank the Baker-Polito administration for their continued commitment to Cape Cod residents and businesses."

Since 2015, the Baker-Polito Administration has constructed more than 20 major trail sections throughout the Commonwealth, including the Neponset River Greenway, the Blackstone River Greenway, the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail, the Charles River

Greenway's Braille Trail, and the Norwottuck Rail Trail.

The Baker-Polito Administration's focus is on building out quality networks of trails, not just adding to the miles of bike paths in the state. The connectivity of trails to important destinations is a priority as is addressing critical gaps between trails which have been created over the course of many years.

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